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ABSTRACT

Many exciting and successful staff development programs with different goals and objectives and using varied techniques and approaches have been realized in recent years. Each was successful not only because of the unique approaches it utilized, but because of the careful planning and preparation that encompassed each program. A number of crucial elements common to each of these model programs should be explored. Among these essential ingredients are an appropriate assessment of teacher needs before inservice sessions are scheduled, a carefully prepared outline of the year's objectives, a realistic schedule for activities, a provision for release time, morning sessions whenever possible, a reward system, well-prepared agendas, capitalization on hired consultants, and a plan for evaluation of the entire program and each of its individual sessions and components. Looking at the methods for implementing the actual training, one might consider some of the following structures: workshops, institutes, seminars, study groups, micro-teaching, intervisitation, master-teacher rotations, and carousels. (Author/IRT)

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CATCHING THE KINKS IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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It's Thursday, 3:30 and teachers are sending students on their way, a last minute straggler here and there, a stack of papers to be graded, lesson plans due tomorrow; and the friendly reminder comes over the speaker, "Will all teachers please meet in the auditorium for a short inservice meeting?"

Two hours and three textbook salesmen later, teachers finally pack up those papers to go home.

Little wonder that inservice workshops are often disliked, ineffective and have become a major concern to program directors who must implement staff development programs as part of their program plan.

It has become increasingly more important to explore varied and innovative avenues for appropriate teacher inservice training now that staff development programs have become an established practice in most school systems, and in all federal programs. Teachers cannot be expected to participate willingly in poorly planned, irrelevant, after hours sessions and to profit from them is inconceivable.

Many exciting and successful staff development programs with different goals and objectives, and using varied techniques and approaches have been realized in recent years. Some have been implemented using workshops, other seminars, or inter-visitations, informal study groups and even micro-teaching techniques to develop teacher skills. Each was successful, not only because of the unique approaches it utilized, but because of the careful planning and preparation that encompassed each program. A number of crucial elements, common to each of these model programs, should be explored (and exploited) by other programs. Among these essential ingredients are:

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1) An assessment of teacher competencies necessary for meeting the needs of the children and for implementing the district's educational plan to its fullest potential.

2) An appropriate assessment of teacher needs before inservice sessions are scheduled, in the form of questionnaires, informal teacher observation and interviews or a brainstorming and prioritizing session with teachers as primary participants.

3) A carefully prepared outline of the year's objectives based upon the needs assessment and program goals, including a scope and sequence for teacher training.

4) A realistic schedule for activities, well-spaced, and integrated into the school calendar, avoiding last minute conflicts and surprises.

5) A provision for release time during the school day for teachers, preventing the "after hours blues" and encouraging the use of parents and teacher assistants in the teacher role.

6) Morning inservices whenever possible, capitalizing on the full energies of personnel and delegating high priority to the inservice.

7) A reward system for inservice in the way of support from principals and encouraged use of learned skills and ideas as well as praise for implementation of those innovations.

8) Well prepared agendas for each session complemented by appropriate learning experiences and follow-up plans.

9) Capitalization of hired consultants, making fullest use of their skills for developing in-house potential as well as presenting new views on content.

10) A plan for evaluation of the entire program and each of its individual sessions and components.

These ingredients, coupled with the appropriate administrative support and teacher involvement will generally produce the kind of program which will be the most effective.

Looking then at the methods for implementing the actual training, one might consider some of the following structures:

1) workshop - informal sessions in which participants are actively involved and task oriented - (can be an abused medium for teacher training).

2) institute - a cluster of intensive training experiences with a particular emphasis which will develop certain competencies in the participants.

3) seminar - a course with limited number of participants who are concerned with concepts rather than factual content, and who gather frequently to discuss the issues which are generated from their work experiences.

4) study groups - similar to seminars, but the participants choose discussion topics ahead of time and search out the information they wish to share.

5) micro-teaching - a series of sessions in which teachers either observe actual teaching or video-taped teaching, critique the session and reteach it, including the amended portions.

6) inter-visitation - a plan for teachers to visit other teachers during class time to observe their teaching techniques and upon returning to their classrooms, practicing those newly learned methods.

7) master-teacher rotations - selected teachers become models for other teachers who intern under them for a period of time.

8) carousel - a series of simultaneous sessions from which participants must choose, or rotate through in one day.

Each of these models provides the structure for unlimited large and small group learning experiences; and the utilization of a number of different kinds of resources within each district. Only with comprehensive and diverse planning such as this will staff development programs be able to capitalize on the numerous needs of their teachers as a learning training resource.